

Message Text

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C O N F I D A I N T I A L NEW DELHI 8734

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR, IN

SUBJ: DESIRABLE LEVEL OF INDIAN OPIUM PRODUCTION

REF: A) NEW DELHI 8336 AND PREVIOUS; B) NEW DELHI 8562

BEGIN SUMMARY: ON JULY 27, CENTRAL BOARD OF EXCISE AND CUSTOMS CHAIRMAN REITERATED TO DCM THE GOU'S PLAN TO RAISE QUESTION OF DESIRABLE LEVEL OF INDIAN OPIUM PRODUCTION ON NEXT CND MEETING. HE CITED INCREASING PRESSURES FROM PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES WHO FEEL USG POLICY IS HOLDING BACK INCREASE IN INDIAN PRODUCTION. BECAUSE OF CONTROL PROBLEM, EXPANSION OF INDIAN POPPY GROWING AREA IN ANY CASE WILL BE SLOW. DCM NOTED USG'S AWARENESS OF QUESTION, WHICH CURRENTLY IS BEING EXAMINED AT HIGH LEVEL IN WASHINGTON. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING DCM'S APPOINTMENT CONCERNING UNITED NATIONS FUND FOR DRUG ABUSE CONTROL BEING REPORTED SEPTTEL, CHAIRMAN OF CENTRAL BOARD OF EXCISE AND CUSTOMS JASJIT SINGH RAISED QUESTION OF INCREASING PRESSURES ON INDIA TO
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INCREASE PRODUCTION OF LICIT OPIUM. SINGH CLAIMED HE IS

BEING "FLOODED" WITH REQUESTS FROM EUROPEAN AS WELL AS AMERICAN PHARMACEUTICAL FIRMS THAT INDIA SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASE OPIUM PRODUCTION TO ENABLE THEM TO MEET RISING DEMAND FOR MEDICINAL OPIUM DERIVATIVES. HE ADDED SOME EUROPEAN PRODUCERS ARE BLAMING INDIAN HESITATION TO INCREASE PRODUCTION ON THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF US LONG RANGE POLICY TO EVENTUALLY ERADICATE BOTH LEGAL AND ILLEGAL OPIUM POPPY GROWING THROUGHOUT WORLD.

2. SINGH SAID HE PERSONALLY QUESTIONED WHETHER ENDING LEGAL OPIUM PRODUCTION MIGHT NOT CREATE MORE PROBLEMS THAN IT SOLVED. EXERCISING EFFECTIVE CONTROL OVER SYNTHETICS COULD PROVE TO BE MORE DIFFICULT PROBLEM THAN POLICING LEGAL OPIUM PRODUCTION.

3. EXCISE AND CUSTOMS CHAIRMAN REITERATED GOI INTENTION TO RAISE DESIRABLE LEVEL OF INDIAN OPIUM PRODUCTION AT MARCH 1974, GENEVA SESSION OF UN COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS. HE CLAIMED THAT ITEM ALREADY HAS BEEN PLACED ON AGENDA AND THAT GOI VERY MUCH HOPES "INTERNATIONAL CONSENSUS" WILL EMERGE FROM MEETING. GIVEN KNOWN PROBLEMS OF NARCOTICS ADDICTION IN SOME COUNTRIES, GOI IS RELUCTANT TO INCREASE OPIUM PRODUCTION WITHOUT APPROVAL OF OTHER INTERESTED COUNTRIES AND INTERNATIONAL BODIES BECAUSE OF INDIA'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR ENFORCING EFFECTIVE CONTROLS. EVEN WITH GREEN LIGHT FROM INCB, EXPANSION OF INDIAN OPIUM POPPY GROWING COULD NOT BE RAPID. GOI AT PRESENT IS NOT CONSIDERING EXPANSION OF POPPY CULTIVATION EXCEPT IN AREAS WITHIN OR CONTIGUOUS TO PRESENT OPIUM GROWING DISTRICTS.

4. DCM SAID HE WISHED TO ASSURE CHAIRMAN THAT USG IS WELL AWARE OF PHARMACEUTICAL FIRMS' STRONG DESIRE TO IMPORT MORE INDIAN OPIUM. AT THIS TIME HE COULD ONLY STATE THAT THIS QUESTION IS RECEIVING HIGH LEVEL USG ATTENTION. HE COULD APPRECIATE POINT THAT OPIUM SUBSTITUTES MIGHT ALSO PRESENT DIFFICULT CONTROL PROBLEM. HOWEVER, DEVELOPMENT OF SYNTHETIC SUBSTITUTES FOR OPIUM, JUST AS THEY HAVE BEEN FOUND FOR MANY OTHER DRUGS, PROBABLY IS INEVITABLE. ONCE SYNTHETICS ARE AVAILABLE, HE HOPED USG AND GOI COULD WORK TOGETHER ON CONTROL PROBLEM FOR MUTUAL BENEFIT.

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5. SINGH ALSO NOTED GOI DISAPPOINTMENT AT SMALLER THAN EXPECTED 1973 OPIUM CROP (REF B). HOWEVER, HE SAID MORPHINE CONTENT EXPECTED TO BE HIGHER THIS YEAR WHICH SHOULD COMPENSATE TO SOME EXTENT FOR SHORTFALL. HE ALSO COMMENTED ON INDIAN GOLD SMUGGLING PROBLEM WHICH SUDDENLY HAS BECOME TO "STANDSTILL" BECAUSE DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL GOLD PRICE ARE NOW ABOUT EQUAL. HOWEVER, HE NOTED THERE PROBABLY

SVTILL IS A LARGE AMOUNT OF ILLEGAL FOREIGN EXCHANGE IN COUNTRY
AND THE GOI EXPECTS SMUGGLING APPARATUS TO FIND OTHER
SCARCE COMMODITIES ON WHICH TO SPEND IT.
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